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Statement submitted by Society for Upliftment of Masses, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2014/1/Rev.1, annex II.

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Statement

In order to sustain gains relating to health in the post-2015 era, the following issues should be given priority attention. This analysis is in the context of India.

1. Sustain the momentum for health care built by the Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals relating to health have helped us to achieve commendable progress with regard to reducing child and maternal mortality and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. For example, the under-five mortality rate in Southern Asia has declined from 117 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 66 in 2010, with India achieving a still better rate of 63. These concerns should continue getting priority attention in the post-2015 development agenda.

2. Ensure access to affordable drugs

Access to affordable drugs in developing countries was one of the lesser known targets of the Millennium Development Goals ("In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries"). According to the report of the Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force on Goal 8, essential medicines continue to be unaffordable and insufficiently accessible to the poor. Drugs are a major component of health care and access to affordable drugs should therefore be a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development agenda. In India, for example, despite the huge infrastructure for the delivery of health-care services set up by the Government, the private sector accounts for nearly 80 per cent of the cost of outpatient treatment, 71 per cent of which is for prescription medicines. This is mainly due to the well-established pharma-doctor nexus. It is necessary to explore policy options to ensure easy access to affordable drugs.

3. Reduce the incidence of non-communicable diseases

Non-communicable diseases are currently the leading cause of death worldwide. In 2008, almost two–thirds of deaths in the world were due to non-communicable diseases, comprising mainly of cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and chronic lung diseases. According to the World Health Organization (2011), with over 5.2 million deaths in 2008, non-communicable diseases have become a number one killer in India too. It is therefore necessary to have disease-specific targets, which should include parameters for prevention, control, treatment and access to health care.

4. Stop unethical medical practices

Unethical medical practices are another major source of concern. With more and more health-care facilities being set up by the corporate world, where profit is the major driving force, it is necessary to put a stop to the unethical medical practices plaguing our people. It is necessary to have suitable parameters to address concerns relating to prenatal sex determination tests, medical negligence, unethical clinical trials, misleading advertising and quackery.

5. Provide geriatric and palliative care

Owing to increased longevity, the proportion of elderly people in the total population is increasing very fast. According to the 2011 census, there are currently 100 million elderly people in India. This is projected to increase to 315 million (20 per cent of the population) by 2050. A goal-oriented approach is required to address their concerns and to give them a life with dignity. There is also a great need to prescribe specific targets for geriatric and palliative care, including age-friendly environments and housing.